

# In-class work as participation

## WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE?

This guide serves as an explanation of using in-class work to evaluate student participation, and why in-class work is preferred over less-structured forms of participation. Suggestions for facilitating in-class work, and samples, are provided.

## HOW DO I USE IT?

Change existing class participation to in-class work by following the suggested facilitation process. Plan types of in-class work using the provided samples as a guide. For assistance, [contact CET](mailto:cet.usc.edu).

Participation is a common component, if not a requirement, of most classes. Participation is also an aspect of student engagement, and necessary when using active learning. For more information on active learning, see CET Active Learning resources.

### Participation pitfalls

Instructors commonly report the following difficulties with participation. Luckily, there is a way to mitigate all of these difficulties by evaluating participation with in-class work.

* Defining what is meant by participation
* Defining what counts as acceptable/passing participation
* Getting students to participate
* Getting all students to participate
* Deciding how much participation should be worth
* Deciding how often participation will be required
* Keeping accurate records of who participated, when, and how
* Grading participation
* Calculating a final participation grade based on tangible evidence/records
* Managing student contestations of participation grades

#### USC policy reminder

* Per university policy, class participation may not count for more than 15% of the total course grade.
* Per university policy, credit may not be awarded solely for attendance.

### In-Class Work

In-class work serves several purposes and comes in many different forms. It is a record of both participation and attendance because it requires all students to produce a small deliverable, or product, of their learning during class time. These deliverables, worth just a few points, also provide the instructor with a way to check on student progress, known as formative assessment, and a tangible product on which to base an in-class work grade. These minor, short assignments should not severely increase an instructor’s workload or grading burden because in-class work need not be assigned for every class meeting, can be assigned to groups where every student in the group earns the same score, and are worth only a few points.

#### Types of In-Class Work

There are numerous assignments that could be used as in-class work, or tangible evidence of active participation. The following are some of the most common types of in-class work. Note that in-class work does not have to take a lot of time, and grading rubrics are not usually necessary for assessing in-class work.

* Small group assignment submitted/presented/performed by the end of class
* Summary of the lecture/reading/topic/discussion submitted by the end of class
* One-minute write on a prompt related to the day’s topic
* Blackboard post/comment responding to a prompt related to the day’s topic
* A submitted question left unanswered by the end of class
* A submitted muddy point the student finds challenging to grasp
* Open-notes partner quiz
* Problem set solved in groups

#### In-Class Work Sample Policies

The course syllabus includes a description of in-class work and notifies students of their responsibilities. Instructors may adapt the sample in-class work policies below. Note that in-class work is not made up if a student is absent, so it is recommended to drop the lowest couple scores on in-class work.

* Students will complete work assigned during class time, such as small group assignments, open-notes quizzes, and polls that count towards their in-class work grade. Credit will be given for thoughtful completion. The lowest two scores on in-class work will be dropped.
* As a record of active participation and attendance, the instructor may require the completion of small, in-class work products individually or in teams. For teamwork, all members will receive the same grade for the work product. The lowest four scores on in-class work will be dropped. In-class work may be assigned at any point during the class; students who miss the assignment due to arriving late or leaving early will not have an opportunity to make up the work.

### Facilitation process for changing participation to in-class work

Instructors who change existing participation to in-class work will work through the following facilitation process.

#### Pre-

* Decide if it is desirable/practical to collect in-class work for every class session, or at random throughout the semester
* Select which types of in-class work to assign (see sample types above)
* Decide which in-class work assignments will be for a group grade vs. individual
* Change the word “participation” to “in-class work” everywhere mentioned in the syllabus
* Add a clear description of in-class work to the syllabus (see sample policies above)

#### During-

* Assign the in-class work as planned
* Monitor students as they complete in-class work
* Collect in-class work via the desired method (on paper, via Blackboard, in-class presentation, etc.)

#### Post-

* Review submitted in-class work, noting themes where students may need further practice
* Enter grades/points earned for in-class work
* Return in-class work to students if needed